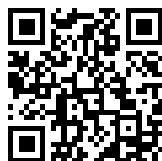


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THE  
BLESSING OF THE CALVARY  
ON THE  
GRACE DIEU ROCKS.  
A SERMON

PREACHED ON THE OCCASION

BY

DOM. W. BERNARD ULLATHORNE,

MONK AND PRIEST OF THE HOLY ORDER OF ST. BENEDICT.

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Mihi absit gloriari, nisi in cruce Domini Nostri Jesu Christi.

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LONDON :  
CHARLES DOLMAN, 61, NEW BOND STREET.

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1843.

43

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## THE OCCASION.

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ON the festival of our Lord's Circumcision, which opened the year of his grace, 1843, was solemnly blessed the first Calvary, in memory of our Lord's dear passion, erected in England since that tempest of the sixteenth century swept over the land, and destroyed all such blessed memorials from amongst us.

This Calvary has been raised upon the Grace Dieu Rocks, as a place of devout pilgrimage for the inhabitants of the parishes of Grace Dieu and Whitwick. The Grace Dieu Rocks lift their granite heads in a variety of shapeless masses, and crown the mountainous heights of the Charnwood Forest, so famous in our national legends.\* The rock which now bears the representation of our Saviour's sufferings, looks down, towards the north and west, upon a vast and diversified scene which extends into five counties. Not far distant, in the one direction, from the ruins of the ancient Cistercian Abbey of Grace Dieu, it is about equally near, in the opposite point, to the Monastery of the same rule, according to the Trappist reform, established within a few years, with a view to the renovation of that devout order in England. At the foot of the rocks stand the schools of St. Aloysius, which are open to the poor of the surrounding neighbourhood. The blessing of the Calvary was in this manner. Early in the morning was chaunted a solemn High Mass of the festival in the chapel of Our Lady of Grace Dieu, according to the Gregorian note of the Roman Gradual. Then a solemn High Mass was also sung in Holy Cross chapel, Whitwick. Then, as evening drew on, we repaired to the Rocks of Grace Dieu, which are situated midway between these two chapels. The surpliced clergy stood officiating at the foot of the Calvary ;

\* Charnwood Forest was the scene of the predatory exploits of the celebrated Earl of Huntingdon, commonly known by the name of Robin Hood. In a valley beneath the lofty hills of this district, the tournament of Ashby de la Zouch, immortalised by Sir Walter Scott in "Ivanhoe," took place. This forest formerly contained five devout monasteries : and in a sequestered spot within a wood very near the Park of Garendon is still to be seen a miraculous spring, called to this day Holy Well, attached to which was formerly a Cistercian hermitage. The neighbouring peasantry still visit this well out of devotion, believing that a holy virtue is dispensed by the clear stream which issues from it. This fountain is never known to freeze, and both summer and winter it preserves the same temperature.

and the devoutly eager multitude, like the multitudes round our Saviour's person, pressed upon them round the foot of the crucifixion. We chaunted the *Our Father* and the *Hail Mary* with many voices in a Roman chaunt. The day was beautiful, the sun shone over the wide scene upon us with his departing rays in a rich red light, and a vast and varied country spread before us under our feet, as we stood absorbed upon those elevated rocks. The Reverend Father Gentili, of the order of Charity, stood upon the steps of the Calvary, and taking in hand the Scriptures, he opened them to the multitude.—“*As the serpent was exalted in the desert, so shall the Son of Man be lifted up.*” This was his text. He spoke of the serpent as the emblem of sin, and of its destruction on the cross. The multitude around him were in the habit of hearing this venerable missionary preaching to them under the open air amidst their villages, but they had not witnessed him in a moment of interest so intense as the present. Their attention was earnest, their eyes were gazing and softening at the image of the crucified before them, as he drew from it piercing applications to their condition. The sun shone his last upon us profoundly moved with one common emotion drawn from the spectacle before us, as the eloquent missionary concluded. It was one of those solemn moments of existence that sink into the memory with all their circumstances, and suffer no change from time. Aided by four priests, he then solemnly pronounced the blessing of the Calvary from the Roman Ritual, chaunts were sung by the surrounding crowds, and we imprinted with our lips the respect of our hearts upon the sacred sign. But we prayed in secret for our country. When last a Calvary had been erected in England, she was one and happy in faith; only the power of the cross can unite her and heal her divisions. O, let us all humble ourselves and pray, for this kind can only be healed in prayer and fasting. God must do it, not man; the cross, and not the pride of human wit. Let us all make ourselves worthy of so great a bliss, and God will surely grant it in ways best known to himself.

Looking back upon that blessed Calvary, we took our way to the chapel of Our Lady of Grace Dieu, where solemn vespers were chaunted chorally; then this Sermon which follows was preached, and our dear Lord blessed us in person with the solemn benediction of his most holy Sacrament.

## A SERMON, &c.

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“And after eight days were accomplished, that the child should be circumcised, his name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel, before he was conceived in the womb.”—LUKE II. 21.

THIS verse, my dear brethren, forms the gospel of this festival. They shed his blood, and they call him Saviour, and they do this on the eighth day after he is born in poverty and distress. They repute him amongst sinners, as if he had been a child born of concupiscence; and they give him a name, sent from heaven before his arrival, which declares his power to deliver his people from their sins. What a name of power, to be inherited amidst a scene of weakness, which already anticipates that life of labour, of sorrows, and of ignominy, by which his power shall be perfected, and the salvation of his people be accomplished.

Christians, what a beautiful thought, how perfect an abridgment of the history of our redemption; how profound, how tender, and how true a picture is that, which represents the child Jesus already reposing on his cross, resting his infantine limbs upon that bed of sorrow, looking forward with eager foresight, and so smiling with the child's simple delight at the grandeur of the victories he is about to win in so terrible a combat. From his childhood, living on his cross, and gathering all the sorrows of the universe beneath him for a couch. Other children are born full of astonishment and helplessness, and are from necessity committed to their mother's arms. But the Son of God is born with clear views of his destiny; he is even now about his Father's concerns; his heart is full of his high function of mercy; he looks forward

through a life of toil and suffering, reflects on our miserie and on the divinity dishonoured, lies him down in resignation upon his cross, and prays to his heavenly Father. Sacrifices and offerings Thou wouldest not, the blood of bulls and of goats cannot atone ; but Thou hast fitted this body to me, and Thou hast written in the beginning of thy decrees, that I should do thy will, O God. Behold, I come to do thy will for all who are disobedient.

Eight days have not passed since we saw him through the eyes of those shepherds born in Bethlehem ; and now, on this day of his circumcision, he has laid him down upon his cross, and begun the shedding of his blood ; with trembling and wailing he has offered the beginnings of expiation, and received the mark of sinners. Oh, course begun of love and sorrow ! In exile, with full knowledge of his country ; in ignominy, with clear knowledge of his glory, with the freedom of the Divinity in the prison of our flesh,—he is painfully baptised in his blood ; but this is only a beginning, and he declares himself straightened throughout life, until this baptism be completed on the cross. “ I have a baptism wherewith to be baptised, and how am I straightened until it be accomplished.” The sins of men unexpiated, and a life shared with a world of injustice, straighten the divine Son of God. The sorrows of men straighten him, the follies of men straighten him ; flesh and blood, so alien to the purity of the Godhead, straighten him on every side, and the cross is before him. Wonder not, then, that you so often hear him speaking of his cross. For when he tells so many others who are drawn near his person, even before the time of his holy passion, to take the cross and bear it with him daily, he shows that it is his own daily burden. And when, for one moment of his mortal life, he made his glory to appear, and, in his transfiguration on Mount Thabor, the divine splendour shone forth through his humanity, it only made the more manifest his inward life upon the cross ; and he spoke to those old prophets of the excessive sufferings he was to accomplish in Jerusalem. We can scarcely

imagine that sacred heart in any period of its mortal existence, except it be encircled with thorns, and pierced with nails and lances. All his outward existence shows that his inward life is on the cross; and not only from the judgment-hall to the mountain of skulls, but all the way which he trode, from the first hour of his birth to the last of his life, and from Bethlehem to Calvary, he carries the burden of his cross. There is no approaching to Christ without his cross, there is no true beholding of the Son of God for us without the marks of his crucifixion. He who, from eternity, is the splendour of perfect beauty to his Father, is nothing to us without his shameful cross. The Father Himself is seen to us but through the cross of His Son. We cannot love Jesus, if we love not his cross; we cannot praise nor exalt him, if we praise not and exalt not the glories of his cross. With the apostle, then, my brethren, let us love the cross, let us know nothing but the cross, let us praise and exalt and magnify the cross, that we may give glory to him who was exalted upon its wood.

O, Jesus, for ever crucified: Jesus, without whose cross we are nothing that is worthy, and to whom we all come as empty vessels to be filled at the fountain; Jesus, whose open arms invite us, and whose goodness gives us confidence to come to thee; Jesus, through whose side, from thy pierced heart, flow the sacraments of our life, and in whom alone we dare look up to thy Father, and call him *ours*, by whom alone our prayer, which thy spirit inspires, is accepted,—do thou inspire my discourse, and let it fall upon these hearts, like the dew on Hermon, or like the oil on Aaron, or rather like thy blood on Calvary: let it proceed from thee, and draw these all to thee, that we may draw the spirit of our life from our Saviour's fountains.

St. Paul began and finished the praises of the cross, when he told the Ephesians and the Colossians that it is the reconciliation of the world, that on the cross Christ overthrew all enmities, that, after so long a war, he made



peace between all things in heaven and all things on earth by the blood of his cross ; that every cause of separation between men is broken down, and all things re-established through the cross ; that the decree of condemnation which stood against us, Christ has taken and blotted with his blood, and has attached it with him to the cross ; that the two testaments—that Old Testament of promise and the New Testament of fulfilment—are all made one in the cross, and the children of the time of hope made one with the children of the time of love in the body of Christ crucified.

From the beginning was it decreed, and from eternity was it written in the will of God, that the cross should be the altar of the world's atonement, and the instrument of man's redemption. For in that eternity which knows neither beginning, end, nor division, God is present to all time, and, before his infinite sight, a thousand years to come are as to-day. In that eternity which is to-day as yesterday, He saw the fall of the world taking its issue out of man's free-will, before the world was created, and already imprinted and raised the sign of its reconciliation upon every part of this creation, as if providing, that when nature became at enmity against Him, it might be endurable still in his sight for the sake of this dear sign, until its deliverance was accomplished by its power upon Calvary. He planted the cross amidst the heavens, when He made them ; and as we pass from the old world into the new, the sign that beams down hope upon the heart of the anxious voyager is that cross amongst the stars which sheds its rays upon the two worlds. The birds that fill the air spread their beautiful forms into a cross. The fishes swim the sea in the mystic form of the cross. Many plants and lovely flowers offer to our gaze the cross. Trees spread their branches so as to teach us the cross, which their tribe is destined to furnish as an altar to the Son of God. Only the serpent, of all living creatures, seems to be totally devoid of the idea of the cross, until Moses, by the power of Christ, lifts it up from the desert

on the cross, and so deprives it of its fiery bites. The very earth herself, by her pole of rest and circling lines of motion, seems to proclaim the mysterious and mighty sign by which she shall recover her lost glory. And man, in his wildest and most fallen state, as despair begins to darken him with her shadows, invokes his last departing hope with outspread arms and supplications, and seems instinctively to pray through the cross. I have seen the rude savage, before one word of the gospel had reached his ears, presented with the image of the crucifixion, and his profound emotion expressed itself, as if his nature unconsciously felt how intimately it concerned his destiny.

O cross, of whose wood that ark was surely made in which we were saved, in our fathers from the deluge ! O cross, of whose wood was raised that altar on which Isaac, commanded by his father, lay obedient and ready to die ! O cross, of whose wood the pillar was formed that raised the serpent in the desert, that it might cease to destroy offending man, and be the healer of his anguish ! O cross, from whose tree was plucked that rod of the high priest Aaron, which put out flowers and bore fruit in the desert, to confirm the priestly power, and by the power of its virtues changed all nature ! O tree, whose root is Jesse and whose fruit is Jesus ! With thy three beams from one, thou art the emblem of the Trinity ; with thy two arms expanded thou art the emblem of forlorn humanity. God and man, and heaven and earth, are all suspended and reconciled on thee ; thou art the centre of all peace.

Why then, my brethren, need we be astonished that the great apostle, who was caught up to heaven by the Son of God, and taught all mysteries, found them all abridged upon the cross ; and when he came back again to the earth, found nothing that is upon it worthy of his love, but only the cross. Need we feel surprised to find him preaching nothing but the cross, and declaring that he has no other knowledge but what is to be found in the cross ? Need we wonder to find him glorifying in the cross as the source of Christ's power within him, and to

see him ever ready to exchange this world and all it holds for the excelling knowledge of Christ crucified? and to hear him proclaim that that very cross, at which the Jews stumbled as being a scandal, and which the wise Gentiles cried down as a folly, was the wisdom by which God guided men, and the power by which He ruled the world? Nay, need we be amazed to witness the apostle so inebriated in all his life, and so full of the spirit of the cross, that he rebukes the world that rebuked him with the one thought that ruled his spirit, that he was nailed on the cross with Christ, and bore the marks of the crucifixion of the Lord in his body?

Who is there that approaches the person of the Son of God in all his history, who does not share his cross in the same measure that he shares his grace? Mary, amidst all the blessings with which angels and prophets greet her, is told that her soul shall be transpierced and suffer a spiritual crucifixion. Joseph tastes the burden of the cross, and bears it into Egypt with the Son of God. John is called to stand by the cross at the hour of its greatest bitterness. Magdalen clasps the cross until she is all covered with the unction of its blood. The life of Andrew was one long desire of the cross, until the time that he was fixed upon its wood. And if Peter holds more of the power and prerogatives of his Divine Master than the other disciples, he also shares more fully in the realities of the cross; if he loved Jesus more than all these, so also was he crucified with Jesus the more, being nailed to the cross with his head downwards. All strong lovers of our Lord are strong and invincible lovers of his cross. And hence the sign of the cross was the dear sign of recognition to the martyr saints. They recognised each other from the pagan throng by the holy sign of the cross. For the cross was not as yet, in those early times, exalted publicly and displayed to the whole earth. It shone amidst the darkness which comprehended not its power. The world proscribed it as an insane and ignominious folly. So the followers of Christ embraced and honoured the cross in

secret, whilst they showed forth its victorious power in their persons. Then, how many Christians drew grace from the cross, until they shared its sufferings even to bloodshed and to death; whilst those who encountered not its stern realities, lived in earnest expectation of like trials. It was then that the line of Roman pontiffs, following Peter, were a line of martyrs; and it was these most truly primitive Christians whose love of the cross Tertullian has described in his book of the "Soldier's Crown:"—"At whatever affair we take in hand or finish, when we go out and when we come in, when we clothe ourselves, or when we wash, when we sit at meals, when lights are introduced, or when we lie down to rest, on all occasions we sign our foreheads with the cross."

But when, after three centuries of open sufferings and of hidden consolations, that holy Providence which rules the Church had sunk deeply within the bosoms of the faithful the personal love of the cross, and had made them intensely conscious, by experience, of its supernatural power to conquer, then came the hour appointed by the Almighty Father to reveal his Son more abundantly to the world. And how could we expect that He should make this revelation but through the power of the cross. The cross appeared in a bright light from heaven to the Roman emperor, whom God had called to sway the world, and Constantine read over it the heavenly command, which told him *in this sign to conquer*. And Constantine was not incredulous to the Divine vision, for then was the cross placed in the imperial standard, and led the Roman armies. And then, in thanksgiving and gratitude to God, who had revealed to him the power of the cross, did the emperor exalt it in the most conspicuous part of the Roman city, and by words and deeds, as Eusebius informs us, invited all mankind to recognize the cross as the saving sign and trophy of victory; as the true standard of valour; as the salvation of the city and of the world; and as the salutary sign which the duration of ages shall never destroy. Then was the cross confessed to be a power greater than all the

powers of this world, which had bowed down before its sign. Then also was brought anew to light, and displayed to men, that very cross on which our Lord had suffered. And at what a solemn moment! For it was after proud men had arisen in the Church to question the divinity of him who had suffered so bitterly on its wood for our sins; and almost immediately after the bishops of the universal Church first met together in the illustrious Council of Nice, to proclaim his divinity aloud and for ever, with a decisive voice to the world,—that the cross on which he had been nailed, and which, as St. Jerome tells, had been buried for one hundred and eighty years—that is, from the time of Adrian—beneath a statue of the goddess of impurity, which had been erected on the very hill of Calvary, was revealed to the saintly mother of Constantine and to the holy bishop of Jerusalem, and its authenticity confirmed by miracles. That cross was raised anew on Calvary, for the veneration of mankind; and St. Cyril not long after informs us, that the piety of the faithful had spread portions of its wood from thence into every part of the world. It is moving to hear this holy bishop of Jerusalem appealing, whilst instructing his converts, to the cross but recently discovered, and standing on Golgotha, in sight of those to whom he speaks, in testimony of all our Lord had suffered for us. “The most resplendent glory of the Christian Church,” he says in his thirteenth catechetical discourse, “is the cross of Jesus Christ. The apostle would take glory in no other thing but in the cross of his master. The healing of the blind man,” he continues, alluding to the miracle recently wrought by its touch, “was doubtless a prodigy, but what is such a miracle compared to that of the entire world healed of its blindness. It is the cross which has triumphed over the darkness of ignorance, and over the captivity of sin. The cross has redeemed the world. Let it be the scandal of the Jew,—to the Christian it is the trophy of the almighty power of God.....It has softened manners, it has subdued barbarism, it has made known the true God. We have seen

that cross, at this day, healing the sick, expelling demons, and dissipating imposture and superstition. A day will come when we shall all see it in the hands of Jesus Christ."

It was then also that the Almighty was pleased to give a yet more illustrious testimony from heaven to the glories of the cross. For in the first year of the episcopacy of St. Cyril, as he has himself attested and described in a letter to Constantius, and as many writers have declared, there appeared on the feast of Pentecost, near the middle of the day, in sight of all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of the strangers gathered from other countries, to pagans as well as Christians, a vast cross of light in the heavens, that extended from over Mount Calvary, where our Lord was crucified, to over the Mount of Olives, where he suffered his agony, and remained for several hours, shining more brilliantly than the sun, and filling all beholders with emotions of fear and joy.

From these times forward the cross was every where publicly exalted, as the sign, the glory, and the power of Christians. And how beautifully speak all the fathers of this love of exalting the cross. "Let us Christians," says St. Ephrem of Syria, in his book of *True Penance*, "let us Christians leave the Gentiles and the Jews, let us crown our doors with the precious and life-giving sign of the cross.....The powers of hell tremble, are struck at the sight of the cross, and fly. Christ's cross has truly sanctified the world, dispersed its darkness, and brought us light; it has banished error, and shown us the straight way; it has assembled nations from the east to the west, from the north to the south, and united them into one Church, in one faith, under one head, by charity. It is the impregnable defence of the faithful."

It was after this time of the open exaltation of the holy cross, that the faithful began to make those devout pilgrimages from so many countries to the places consecrated by the memory of our Lord's most sacred sufferings. And certainly, when undertaken with a pure motive, what more

calculated to make the strongest and holiest impressions on the soul, than thus to leave all things that attach us to the earth for a time, to travel in loneliness through strange lands an unknown stranger, and with this one thought for ever in our mind, that we are hastening and ever drawing nearer to the cross of our Lord, and to the scenes of his great sacrifice, to adore where his footsteps stood. Such men came back full of the graces of the cross, and loved to plant it upon every high rock and hill, a memorial of their dearest thoughts and feelings. But it was when it pleased that high Providence who governs and watches over the Church, and who stirs up her children to wakefulness by calamity and trial ; it was when it pleased God to make the love of the cross yet more profound and spiritual, depriving men of its visible and natural place, and permitting the sensual Mahometans to overpower and possess the Holy Land, that, no longer accessible to the devout, in love and repentance they raised up Calvaries in every place ; and knowing, in the language of St. Jerome, that the graces of God are not confined to the holy places ; knowing that the Church herself, upon whatever soil she is to be found, is the proper place of Christ and of his cross, they offered the mystical sacrifice, and implored the graces of the passion to descend upon those dear memorials as fully as on Golgotha ; and thus, for one place lost, they found the scene of Calvary in every place, and blessed the whole earth with the lifting up of the cross.

And here we are reminded of the apt and beautiful words written by St. Jerome, from the holy places where he dwelt, to his beloved friend St. Paulinus of Nola. "If," he says, "there is any advantage gained by those who dwell in the places where the Saviour of the world accomplished the mysteries of his cross and resurrection, it is for those who, carrying the cross and rising daily with Jesus, render themselves worthy of so holy a habitation. But those who cry, "it is the temple of the Lord, it is the temple of the Lord," let these listen to what the apostle

tells them: "You are the temple of the Lord, and the Holy Spirit dwells within you. Heaven," continues the saint, "is not less open to the islanders of Great Britain than to the citizens of Jerusalem.....God is not confined to a place. From the emperor Adrian to Constantine, that is for one hundred and eighty years, the idol of Jupiter was adored on the very spot where Christ rose again; and they worshipped the statue of Venus on the very spot where our Lord was crucified. The declared enemies of the Christian name imagined that by profaning the holy places they could abolish faith in the death and resurrection of our Saviour. And to what purpose," adds the saint, "do I say all this, but that you may not account more of me for dwelling in a holy place; that whether here or elsewhere, your good works will ever find an equal merit before God. And, to speak to you with open heart, what matters it where you dwell, provided it be in the country, away from the tumult of cities, occupied in seeking Jesus Christ in retirement, praying alone with Christ upon the mountain, and finding anew in this manner the neighbourhood of the holy places. I speak to those who sanctify themselves, for to those engaged in the sanctifying of others another rule is applicable."

It would almost seem as if St. Jerome had addressed to some certain person in Great Britain, in the nineteenth century, that which was written to St. Paulinus at Nola, in the fifth, so perfectly is the spirit of true piety, and of love for consecrated places, the spirit of all ages and of all places within the Church. Alas! alas! how that spirit must have changed and grown feeble in our land before the love of our Lord's cross was changed to hatred of its presence. The pagans sought to annihilate the faith, remarks St. Jerome, by concealing the cross on which our Lord had died, and the Christians signed it on their persons, and bore it in their hearts. The Mahometans drove our fathers from the holy scenes of the cross, and our fathers raised the cross in every scene. O England, England! whence are all thy inward



calamities and divisions ; but that in an evil hour of pride and distraction thou hast pulled down and destroyed the dear memories of our redemption ? And must not the love of the cross have left the heart, before such hatred could have arisen against its outward sign and figure ? Must not every association of the feelings with its holiness, must not all sufferings for its sake, have become an object of dislike ? must not pride of heart have risen to so high a flood, as to hold in terror the very image of self-humiliation, before the dislike of the cross had risen to a destructive hatred of its very memorials upon the soil.

And if now, after three centuries of restless toiling upon the shifting sands of individual sufficiency, it has pleased God to give his grace to men, to admire that power of truth which is so visible within the unity of his Church, and to know she is so rich and abundant in sacramental graces, and to repeat her prayers, and gaze upon her holiness, and confess her beautiful and divine, the work of God ; this turning of the children to the Fathers is also accompanied by a returning love and veneration for the cross, and a desire to see it raised throughout the land.

We live, my brethren, in days that are replete with mystery, and full of the expectation of things to come ; and our strongest hopes that God has mercies yet in store for our dear country, are strengthened yet the more by this returning love for the cross. God is manifesting his holy designs, by reviving in so many parts of the world this spirit of the cross. Martyrs are preaching the cross by their blood. In our own days, as in those of St. Cyril, and of other remarkable periods in the Church's history, there can be little doubt in the minds of those who have considered the evidence, that Almighty God has displayed to multitudes this wondrous sign from the heavens. And let those who can take it, take it ; are there not those in our days, who may exclaim with St. Paul, —“ Be not troublesome to me, for I bear the marks of the sufferings of Christ about me in the flesh ” ?

Christ went up to heaven he left to his twelve apostles, and to them alone, power and office in his holy church. I see, from reading the New Testament, that whether deacons were to be appointed, or converts baptized, or alms to be distributed, the twelve lay hands upon the seven deacons, the twelve baptize the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, and the price of the land sold for the use of the poor is laid at the apostles' feet. I see that no man exercises any holy function, except by their open visible appointment,—that if Timothy rule Ephesus and Titus Crete, it is by virtue of a commission they received from St. Paul. I see, in reading the church history for fifteen hundred years, that the *necessity* of all this was never by any denied; and amid all the ancient heresies and sects, none asserted that there *could* be any other title to the ministerial office. *If* my church, then, can show that she has had this handed down to her, then I recognize in her the authority of the apostles, and bow to their appointment, handed down through many generations.

Glad, indeed, should I be to think that I have made myself plain and clear to all, without exception; glad to think that, whether you agree with me or no, you fully understand my meaning. If any man among you wishes to examine these things, let him pursue this plan:—let him carefully read the history of the christian church from the time of Christ's ascension; let him read the Acts and Epistles with this object before him;—to find out on what ground and authority any man exercised the ministerial office in the days of the apostles. Now, either this authority was derived from the twelve, or else men took it upon themselves, unless miraculously received. Read and see which is the truth of the matter. If St. Paul mean any thing when he writes to Timothy—"the things that thou hast heard of *me*, the same commit *thou* to faithful men;" and again, "lay hands suddenly on no man,"—he implies a *transfer* of authority in the church. Search, dear brethren, for yourselves into this question. It is a very important one. On it hangs the essential constitution of

the church of Christ. Never be beat off from it by thoughts of how things go now. If you are sincere disciples of the Lord Jesus, you will desire in all things to believe and act precisely as his twelve apostles would have you, were they now alive on earth. Now, England is full of good and serious men at this time who smile at this apostolical succession. Suppose these persons had lived in the time of those faithful men to whom Timothy before his death was to commit the government of the Ephesian church;—suppose these men were asked by what authority they exercised the office of bishops or clergy;—suppose any one of their people had gone and said, “I believe in Christ as well as you? why, then, are you to rule over and teach me?” What must be their answer? This: Timothy ordained us, by the laying on of hands, and St. Paul ordained Timothy, and the Lord Jesus appointed St. Paul. Here is our line of succession—here our authority to do and be just what we do and what we are. Brethren, if this was, in the apostolic time, the mode by which men were ordained to serve God as his ministers in his holy church, when did we receive permission from heaven to ordain after another fashion? If I can clearly show you, as I have, that this succession which men smile at now as a fable, was in the early church a solemn *fact*, on which side ought the smile to be? In these days, the watch-word of Protestant England is this—“No man is bound to believe anything unless the Bible teach it.” Be it so. Let us apply that principle to those who smile at the idea of pleading descent from the apostles, as the only right of our bishops to ordain. I go to the Bible. I cannot discover in that Bible, either in Old or New Testament, the slightest imaginable trace of any man assuming any office in the church of Christ, except by open commission delivered to him from the twelve; and in all the church history of fifteen hundred years, I find no trace of such a doctrine avowed. Nay, then, though I stand up here to defend the church and not assail others; if among those others be found the men who *ridicule* our doctrine of apostolical succession, of

them, at any rate, I have a perfect right to ask a few questions respecting the nature of *their* ministry. I ask, who made *them* teachers of God's church? who made them ambassadors from heaven? who made them stewards of the mysteries of Christ? And it is a question to which their own people have a right to get an answer. Either a man replies, "I took it upon myself," or "God called me to it," or else, "I received the office from the hands of others." If he say he took it on himself, I say that the whole Bible teaches that he has no right to do any such thing; for in the apostolic church he cannot point out a single instance of such a thing being for a moment tolerated. If he say, God called me to it; I ask, what evidence can you give me of the fact? If, I received it from others?—who gave it to those others? You profess to be an ambassador. What sign has the king given you to show to those to whom you are sent? It is a strange thing for a rebel nation, lying under the anger of their monarch, to appoint the ambassadors from him to them, themselves. It is a strange thing if man ordains stewards of the mysteries of Christ. Surely God sends his own ambassadors—surely Christ selects his own stewards. Nay, then, if we can show no authority or commission, open, plain, and legible, that the world may know our office, and see that we are sent by God, what shadow of a claim have we to minister in holy things? I say that God never sends a messenger to his people, but he gives him a token of evidence of his mission. The first act with an ambassador is to ask to see his credentials; and if he have none to show, how know I that he is an ambassador at all?

Notice, then, brethren, that it is only with them who *smile* at apostolical succession, that we adopt these questions. If a man *seriously* reject the doctrine, as unsupported by holy writ, him we leave to rest in his own opinion; but with any man who brings anything like *ridicule* to bear upon it, with him we are quite willing to bring matters to an issue.

But let me turn to you who, poorer and less taught, yet love

your church, and are often pushed for an answer to them who examine you. Let your answer be this:—I belong to the church of England, because I believe her bishops have received, by the laying on of hands, continued through many ages, authority and commission from the apostles to teach and rule the flock of Christ;—because, in reading my Bible, I cannot find that any man ever took upon him any holy function, except when appointed by the apostles; and believing that what Christ then ordained is in force now, I am a member of that church which claims this right as transmitted to her hands.

But it is high time to draw toward a conclusion. You will, I hope, carefully notice that in this sermon I have not entered upon the different orders of bishops, priests, and deacons; nor have I in the least degree *proved* that our church has this derived authority of which we speak. You will, perhaps, believe that this is not from difficulty in establishing it, but simply from want of time. I have had before me now but one simple object, and that is this,—to set you upon enquiring whether the New Testament reveals any *other* ground on which any man should exercise any holy function than that of apostolic appointment. Why will you not diligently read the Acts and the Epistles with a view to this very thing? Believe me, the church has no fear as to the result.

But before I finish I must lay one other thought before you, and it is this:—it was a feature in the old Mosaic dispensation, alluded to and expressly pointed out by St. Paul, that no man ever took upon himself the priesthood, but only he who was called of God, as was Aaron. Now, it is very common now-a-days, when we press the consideration of this fact upon our opponents, for them to turn round and say, “Ah! but that was under the law, the old, the carnal dispensation; it is very different under the christian. Very good. But I notice that, on the contrary, in carrying this very principle out of no man making himself a priest, the apostle writes thus, “Even Christ glorified not himself to be called an high priest, but he that said unto

him, Thou art my beloved Son, this day have I begotten thee." Strange, then, that if the Son of God waited for his Father publicly to appoint him, man may take the holy office, at pleasure, on himself.

Brethren, I had much, very much more to say to you, but time forbids; and with one word more I will conclude. Why have I written these things? why called your attention to this subject? Simply because we long for *unity* in the church of Christ. But how does unity spring from this? Thus:—to be united, the church must be under government and submissive to authority. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves," writes St. Paul. Now, for authority in the church, there can be but one foundation,—the command of Christ; and till we recognize in our rulers the successors and delegates of the apostles, there can be no obedience; for no living human being can have any *other* title to demand it.

There is a church (the Roman) the study of whose history and principles is one of the most absorbing questions that can occupy the human mind. From her city upon the seven hills, she has raised an empire far more wonderful than that of pagan Rome; for she has trampled on crowned heads by the moral power of her spiritual dominion. She is, indeed, a marvel: such an union of truth with error—beauty with deformity; but how strong, because *now united*. The Reformation caught her "napping." She was tolerating frauds for miracles—legends for saintly histories;—turning christian alms-begging into unparalleled extortion—spiritual power into temporal tyranny;—and flagrant and palpable abuses and unguardedly monstrous lies, had so alienated the people, that the trumpet signal of a German monk shook her empire and made it totter upon its base. She has not forgot the lesson: she never will. She called her last general council; she consolidated her professed creed and put it into *exhibition* order; she began anew to marshal and discipline her troops; she daubed her defences with untempered mortar; she threw overboard whole heaps of miracles and legends, that she might lighten

the ship that had nearly sunk beneath them ; she painted her face ; she tired her head, and arrayed herself in much that is beautiful and winning ; and in England, at this very day, she is making rapid strides to gain her old dominions. Who can deny these things ? But if so, what is our duty and high calling ? Plainly this :—to examine the foundation of our *own* church ; to strengthen her in her weak points ; to study with deep attention the principles on which we are what we are. Now, Rome is apostolical in her foundation. Though corrupted in her faith, still most of her errors are distorted truth. She must be met upon *apostolical principles*. What, then, is our church built on ? is it based on “the apostles and prophets ?” It is. Read, and you shall see it. And we have this vast superiority over our fallen sister,—we keep “Jesus Christ himself as the chief corner stone.” But there is one thing we stand in grievous need of—*unity*. How is this to be attained ? O ! there is many a mile between us and it, but still we can do something. We in this town can labor for it ; we can study the foundations of church authority ; we can study the church principle of scripture interpretation, and on that hinges every point of controversy ;—we can daily fasten in our minds and memories that every baptized man is a member of our christian family ; we can relieve the poor, because with us they are *members* of Jesus Christ ; we can gradually learn to estimate church communion as a great spiritual bond of union ; we can obey our Prayer Books in the public worship—kneeling, responding, singing, praying all with one voice, and limb, and heart ; and we can make it our daily prayer, “Heal, O Lord, the divisions of thy apostolical church in these realms.” This, brethren, we can do, and this will be a step toward “better things to come.”

## APPENDIX.

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It will be seen by the reader of this sermon, that it touches only on one point connected with the ministerial commission, viz.—“that in the New Testament we do not find any man taking on himself the office of ruler and teacher in the church of Christ, unless by apostolic appointment, or by a miraculous and special call.” This, then, leaves the historical portion of the succession, from the age of the apostles to the present time, perfectly unhandled and unproved. It is one thing to show the true basis of the ministry according to God’s word, and another thing to trace out, in the history of the church, the principle as observed and followed. Now, a demand is frequently made upon us that we should substantiate our claim to the succession, by producing legal proofs of the regular consecration of *each* bishop, traced in a separate line, from our time up to that of the apostles; and it is said, if this cannot be done, the claim cannot be established. If this be so, the “succession” is the *only* question in the christian dispensation for which evidence of this kind and *to this amount* is required to be produced; and the only remark here offered in reply, is this:—the *moral* proof of the apostolical succession being regularly and rigidly preserved in the church, from the beginning, is quite equal in amount to that moral proof on which the genuineness of the gospels, and the canon of New Testament scripture, and the christian evidences generally themselves depend. The records of early, and, indeed, *all* times, are full of evidence that the “succession” has been carefully preserved. The principle pervading all church history is this, “none but a bishop can ordain a bishop.” This has ever been the public and acknowledged canon of the church catholic, and it is passing strange that no instance is adduced from the whole scope of history in which this principle can be shown to have been departed from. Thus Irenæus, who died A.D. 202, says, “we can reckon up both those who by the apostles were appointed bishops in the churches and the successors to those bishops down even to our own times. But since it would take up too much space in such a volume as this to enumerate *all* the churches, we shall confound all those persons who, from whatever bad motive, collect differently from what they ought, by simply indicating that apostolic tradition and that declared faith of that greatest and most ancient and universally known church, founded at Rome by the two most glorious apostles Peter and Paul, which has come down even to us through the succession of her bishops.” And he then enumerates twelve men who, filling the see of Rome in the short space of one hundred and twenty years, bring the succession down to his own time. Tertullian, who died A.D. 240, draws this very line of distinction between the catholic church and the heretics. The church preserved and could show *her* succession of bishops from the apostles; the heretics could not. “Let heretics produce the origin of their churches; let them unroll the order



of their bishops, so running through successions from the beginning, that the first bishop should have for his author and predecessor some one either of the apostles themselves, or of apostolical men their cotemporaries. For in this manner the apostolical churches carry down *their* enrolments." Ecclesiastical history is full of such assertions as to the rigidly-observed law in the church of Christ; the proof, therefore, demanded of us is to this effect, "You must show in each individual case that the church did not publicly say one thing and do another; that while she laid down the very boundary line between the heretics and herself, she did not in any single ordination omit something that was essential." Our reply to this at present, is as follows:—"Gather from the whole current of church history the moral proof of the "succession;" gather from the current of church history the moral proof of the "sacred canon;" lay one beside the other, and see if the same men who witness to the one, do not, with voices as numerous and tones as firm, witness also to the other.

One bishop has been from ancient times generally consecrated by *three* other bishops. This custom, no doubt, arose from a desire to preserve the succession inviolable and blameless; because if one bishop were consecrated only by another, a flaw or irregularity in the title of one man might be perpetuated through many generations. We must notice, then, two facts:—the first, that one bishop is *sufficient* to consecrate by himself, so far as his vested power goes; but that from fear of transmitting thus an error in the church of Christ, two or three have been commonly employed. Notice, then, the effect of this on the moral proof of the "suc-

cession." A is consecrated by B, C, D; B by E, F, G; C by H, K, L; D, by M, N, O. Now A's consecration is valid if either B's, or C's, or D's be valid; *i. e.* B, C, D, must have been *all of them* misconsecrated to affect the position of A. Again, E, F, G must have been *all of them* misconsecrated to affect the position of B. Similarly with C and D as regards their own personal consecration. See, then, that it is not a single individual *flaw* that affects the question: for the employment of three men when one is spiritually *sufficient*, creates a mass of moral evidence demonstrating the anxious care of the church, that a bishop's *title* as well as *character* should be "blameless." Remember, then, the *law* of the church, "none but a bishop may ordain a bishop." Remember that an *exception* to the rule cannot be produced; that *examples* of the rule are numberless throughout all history. Is not all this moral proof sufficient to answer those, at any rate, who treat that as a fable, which we affirm to be a fact?

